

I attended last night's State of the Union address with hopes that President Bush would surprise me and offer some fresh new ideas on how to solve at least some of the pressing challenges that our nation faces today.

However, five minutes into the speech, all I could think was, "Haven't I heard this speech before". And essentially I have. We all have.

It was the same speech we all heard last year and the year before that, touting the same stale old remedies that haven't worked in the past and most likely won't work in the future.

Middle class families across the nation are feeling a serious economic pinch as a direct result of President Bush's lack of oversight and fiscal mismanagement. Now facing a mounting mortgage crisis, lower wages, and skyrocketing costs for basic necessities like gas, health care, and college tuition, working families deserve real answers, not recycled ideology.

They deserve bold new leadership, not renewed proposals for deficit-financed tax cuts for the wealthy that have already widened the income gap between millionaires and middle-class workers.

We know where those lead.

Since President Bush took office in January 2001, the unemployment rate has increased 19 percent and long-term joblessness has doubled, making job creation among the worst since the Hoover Administration.

On the President's watch, gas prices have risen 107 percent and the United States has accumulated \$1.33 trillion more in debt to foreigners than this country has accumulated in its first 224 years.

Meanwhile, 47 million Americans, including 9 million children, are left uninsured and hundreds of thousands of families were forced to foreclose on their homes in 2007 because of unscrupulous lenders.

Still, instead of a renewed commitment to assisting working families, President Bush appears resolved to ignore priorities at home while continuing to spend billions of dollars every month on a war with no end in sight.

In spite of these great challenges to our country and the opportunity to show leadership, President Bush offered few new ideas to solving many of our nation's most pressing problems.

Now, to be fair, I do appreciate Mr. Bush's willingness to negotiate on the economic stimulus package that the House of Representatives passed today. However, after all this time, it is clear that any such new ideas to fixing America's problems will continue to originate from Congress.

We in Congress are committed to moving forward, passed the failed policies of President George W. Bush and toward economic recovery.

We are committed to looking for fresh ideas and policies that address the tremendous challenges we face as a nation.

However, it is clear from last night's State of the Union that we will not be turning to the White House for those ideas during the last year of Mr. Bush's presidency.